



## Story from the Field

# FARMER STOPS POACHING DUE TO USAID INTERVENTION

Without the timely intervention by USAID-funded and US Forest Service-managed Coastal Sustainable Landscapes Project (CSLP), a farmer at Tweakor No 1 in the Jomoro District of Ghana's Western Region, would have continued his illegal hunting activity in the Ankasa rain forest, one of the last virgin forests in Ghana which borders his community. The farmer noted that the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA)<sup>1</sup>, formed with the CSLP's assistance, has allowed him to refrain from continuing the illegal act. He made the revelation when the CSLP's Activity Manager at USAID, Justice Odoi and Isaiah Tuohieno of the US Embassy in Ghana, joined the CSLP team for a monitoring visit to Navrongo and Tweakor No 1 in late April 2015. The farmer, responding to a question from Justice about their impressions of the project, noted;

*'To be honest, I used to enter the forest to kill animals for a simple reason: to pay the school fees of my children. However, since joining the VSLA I have stopped that act. Now, I can easily get a loan from the group to pay the school fees. I knew that going to the forest was illegal and also felt sad and scared because I went there alone at night leaving my wife and children at home; it was risky, anything negative could have happened to me in the forest, or even on the way. Now, I don't go there anymore, and won't ever go again because I can pay my children's school fees from funds I obtain from my membership in the VSLA.'*

As part of the trip, the team visited a secondary forest of a farmer where the CSLP has provided a beehive that has now been colonized. The farmer, with several others, has agreed not to deforest such places but use it for beekeeping and other forest products. The team also visited one of the CSLP's tree nursery sites at Tweakor No 1 (pictured below), and interacted with farmers there.

Farmers applauded USAID for the project and lauded many of the CSLP's interventions. These included beekeeping as an alternative livelihood, several targeted trainings such as climate change awareness, climate smart agriculture, farmer managed natural regeneration, and the VSLA, which they emphasized, has helped them to build a better savings culture accompanied by its timely access to a means of credit which is desperately needed as the farmer's story above demonstrates.



Executives of Tweakor No 1 VSLA group at a share purchase meeting of the group

<sup>1</sup> Is a member/community managed group of 15-25 people who save together and take small loans from those savings